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ABSTRACT

Pupils need variety in their writing experiences, and social studies writing involves writing across the curriculum as well as stressing positive attitudes and feelings of the learner. Subject matter should come from the pupil, and diverse learning opportunities should assist the pupil in acquiring the relevant facts, concepts, and main ideas necessary in writing. Within the context of the appropriate social studies lessons and units, methods of fostering student writing include: (1) creation of experience charts, showing selected cultural objects and students' reactions; (2) writing outlines; (3) using correlating library books; (4) writing diary, log, and journal entries; and (5) writing plays, poetry, and folklore. (EF)

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READING, WRITING AND THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Marlow Ediger

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Social studies teachers need to stress the concept of writing in the social studies. A quality curriculum advocates that learners write across the curriculum. There are numerous purposes in writing. Individuals write for a variety of reasons. Pupils need to perceive that writing taught in school has utilitarian values. What is emphasized as objectives in school can be used in society. The teacher must determine where a pupil is presently in writing achievement and assist the learner in making continuous progress. Each pupil then needs to attain optimally.

There are numerous component parts in writing content for others to read. Ediger (1995) wrote:

There are numerous separate academic disciplines that may be taught in the school setting. The following language arts areas, among others, might then be taught separately from other academic areas...

1. grammar
2. spelling
3. oral communication
4. reading
5. literature
6. punctuation
7. formal writing
8. creative writing
9. handwriting
10. listening.

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When viewing the above separate subject areas, it is quite obvious that the teacher could relate curriculum areas so that fewer isolated subjects are taught. For example, items four and five above could easily be correlated. Pupils then would study reading skills within the literature curriculum. To further decrease the isolated language arts areas, the teacher might well bring in oral communication skills (item three above) as the content in literature is being discussed in the classroom setting. Listening skills (item ten above) could definitely be brought in as the content in literature is being discussed. What has been read and discussed in literature may be dramatized creatively or pantomimed; these are additional language arts skills, not listed above that may be stressed in ongoing units of study. Much correlation, fusion, and integration of the language arts can easily be emphasized here.

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Presently, the integrated model of curriculum development is in vogue. If pupils perceive that knowledge is related, they will tend to retain previously acquired subject matter for a longer period of time as compared to learning subject matter in isolation, such as isolated facts.

Developing Experience Charts

Primary grade pupils may experience a rich writing curriculum through the use of the experience chart. To provide readiness, the teacher may have selected objects on an interest center. For example, the following objects from the Middle East provide a model:

1. a shepherd's flute used for entertainment while herding sheep.
2. a cloak and baggy trousers worn by bedouins.
3. a drum made form goat's skin stretched over a jug made from clay.
4. a bedouin coffee pot.

The above objects were discussed by a student teacher and a cooperating teacher, whom I supervised, with involved learners. The discussion was lively and enthusiastic. Pupils had not seen these objects before and appeared highly curious as to their use and origin. A map of the Middle East was shown to these first grade pupils. Questions were definitely invited from pupils during the discussion. The resulting experience chart reveals the kinds of thinking learners were engaged in. The teachers then recorded the following comments of pupils after discussing objects from the interest center:

We blew into the shepherd's flute and were not able to make a sound. It was fun though to do so. The drum made soft sounds when we hit it with the palm of our hands. The cloak was too large to fit any of us properly. We looked at the wide baggy trousers and marveled how it looked. We really enjoyed sitting in a circle and pretending that coffee was being drunk using the bedouin coffee pot..

Pupils were guided by the teachers to notice that talk can be written with the use of letters (graphemes) to represent sounds

(phonemes) within the framework of words and sentences. Talk (oral communication) came entirely from learners for the experience chart. Each teacher was a guide and stimulated pupils to speak and listen to the ideas of others. After the experience chart had been completed, pupils read the content as the teacher pointed to words, phrases, and the entire sentence, in sequence. If young pupils cannot do their own writing, they can enjoy seeing the teacher record their ideas. When pupils are ready to do their own writing, they should write their own experience charts. This can be done on any age and achievement level.

Writing Outlines

When readiness is in evidence, the pupil should achieve skills in writing an outline. A good outline is useful in giving an oral report to others. Why? the speaker then has better organization in presenting content to listeners. Sequence is inherent in presenting the subject matter orally. Then too, if a pupil forgets content, he/she may view the outline at that point and present information sequentially.

Each outline should have a title followed by ordered major divisions with Roman numerals. Subdivisions should have sequential capitol letters of the alphabet to show that each subdivision is directly related to its main division. The details are shown by Hindu- Arabic numerals under their related subdivision.

A major reason that pupils forget what has been learned is that subject matter is perceived as being isolated. Relationship of content is then lacking. Developing outlines as a learning opportunity, among others, should assist pupils to integrate ideas acquired through reading, in particular. Subordinate ideas are then related to main ideas as well as quality in logical order of content should be in evidence.

Within a committee setting, pupils may share ideas acquired from an outline. Constructive evaluation of the outline using appropriate criteria may be a part of the committee endeavors. Peers learning from each other can be an excellent way of growing and achieving. When

engaging in evaluation, pupils use that which has been learned. With use made of content acquired, pupils retain subject matter for a longer period of time.

Writing, Variety, and Book Reports

There are numerous library books which relate directly to ongoing social studies units of study. If the selection is large enough, library books may be harmonized/correlated with the basal textbook. Thus a pupil might choose which library book to read based on his/her present level of attainment. Those who read well may select the more complex library books to read. Pupils who possess fewer skills in reading proficiency may choose library books on an easier reading level. The learner is the chooser. Content read by pupils may then be shared in the current lesson being pursued in class. Leaners individually might have read on transportation, communication, family life, education, urban and rural areas, agriculture, and recreation in the unit being pursued. Ideas read can then be shared with others as the lesson progresses in unit teaching. I recommend that basal textbooks be used along with individualized reading. Different sources might then be contrasted and compared such as library book versus textbook subject matter. In making these comparisons, higher levels of cognition might arise in the process. Thus problems identified, questions raised, and critical thinking emphasized in the process might guide learners to appraise sources of information more adequately.

What pupils have read from a library book in terms of content may be appraised, not only by contributions made in classroom discussions, but also with the use of the following activities:

1. making a mural covering major ideas in the library book. A few sentences may be written to describe the mural.
2. presenting an oral report with the use of an outline.
3. developing a related diorama. The scene in the diorama should be described in writing.
4. writing a summary of main ideas covered in the library book.

5. constructing one or more models. Each model made needs to have a summary of ideas contained therein.

6. drawing sequential pictures directly related to the contents in the library book. Clarification of content in these illustrations may be achieved with brief written statements pertaining to each.

7. painting in water color a scene emphasizing a broad theme from the book read. The broad theme with selected subordinate ideas should be written and attached to the art product.

8. engaging in writing a formal dramatization with specific play parts pertaining to a library book read.

9. stressing committee work in written summaries produced when several pupils have read the same book. Multiple copies of a library book in paper back form has become increasingly popular in many classrooms.

10. conducting a survey pertaining to a particular facet of what was read from a library book, such as voting behavior toward candidates running for election, and writing up the included findings.

When reading self selected library books, pupils tend to enjoy the contents and feel a sense of ownership of the social studies curriculum. Many purposeful writing experiences for learners may follow as a result of reading. These activities need to be challenging, meaningful, and purposeful.

Writing Diary Entries

Pupils with teacher guidance should have ample opportunities to write up experiences from each concluded lesson in social studies. Each day's entry should be dated. Rotation of committees and individuals writing the diary entries need to be emphasized so that boredom and routineness does not become a part of the pupil. Developing and maintaining learner interest in writing is important. Learners should be encouraged to keep personal diaries so that practice in writing is stressed continually.

What goes into the diary entries for a lesson in social studies that has been completed must be

1. salient and relevant. Trivia needs to be minimized.
2. directly related to the lesson presentation.
3. important to the learner(s) in that the committee and the individual pupil reflect upon perceived significance.
4. stimulating so that problems and questions are identified.
5. depth oriented so that main and subordinate ideas are written. Shallow misunderstood content should be eliminated.

I will write a sample of diary entries as an example pertaining to a unit on the Middle East. These include the following;

October 13. We studied about the wall surrounding East Jerusalem. The wall was completed in 1542 when the Ottoman Empire ruled the Middle East. Previous walls were built by King Solomon (about 980 BC) and Nehemiah (444 BC). Inside the wall are many very small shops, much like in medieval days. Thus there is a small shop for selling shoes, another for selling spices and grain for food, and still another for selling souvenirs. Hawkers sell tea to drink and fresh garden crops, among other items. The contents in the video tape we viewed showed this city to be bustling and noisy. With traditional Arabic dress, men wear cloaks and head dresses. The latter is kept in place with an agal, a rope- like material, which fastens the clothlike head dress to the head.

October 14. We studied about the Dome of the Rock, a Moslem Mosque completed in 691 AD. This mosque is octagonal and has a golden plaited dome. Prior to entering the mosque, devout followers perform ablutions, that is they wash the faces, feet, and hands before entering this holy place. Here, devout Moslems pray five times a day while facing Mecca, the birth place of Mohammed and the holiest city of Islam. From this place too, Mohammed ascended into heaven and came

back to earth again, according to devout followers of Islam.

October 15. We discussed the Western Wall, adjacent to the Dome of the Rock, which is the only remnant of the ancient Jewish temple. This wall goes back to the days of Herod the Great. Herod was a ruler of the land of Palestine, a part of the Roman Empire. The Western Wall was a part of the entrance to the ancient Jewish Temple. The Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. The natural rock is large indeed in the Wall. Devout Jews pray here each day. Orthodox Jews wear traditional clothing such as the men wear long black coats, black trousers, and a large broad brimmed black hat. Many have cork screw curls on each side of the head.

October 16. A video tape was introduced by the teacher on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, located inside the walled city of Jerusalem. Inside the church is the traditional Golgatha where Christ was crucified, according to devout Christians. Golgatha is a hill inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Nearby is the rotunda which has the tomb of Christ. Here, devout Christians come to the place of entombment of Christ. The Church was built in 1542 after the Crusaders had captured the old city of Jerusalem. The Crusaders held on to Palestine until 1187 when the Moslems recaptured it.

Pupils need to have experiences individually as well as in committees to write diary entries. Quality standards should be stressed when the teacher appraises learner progress in writing. Pupils individually need to attain continuous progress in written work.

Writing Logs in the Social Studies

The teacher should guide pupil writing of log entries. These logs should assist pupils to summarize diary entries and other content gained in ongoing and completed social studies units. Learners need to achieve broader ideas in writing logs, such as attaining generalizations adequately. There are criteria which should be implemented in

teaching- learning situations in writing logs. These are the following:

1. generalizations should cover more specific ideas acquired, including facts.

2. learners need to have ample opportunities to achieve content inductively or by discovery. Deductive or direct teaching is, of course, not omitted.

3. accuracy in writing generalizations is a must. Each generalization may be checked as to its covering comprehensively of subordinate content including factual ideas.

4. the mechanics of writing such as punctuation, spelling, quotation marks, and indentation, among others, are secondary in importance as compared to ideas expressed.

5. sequence in recorded generalizations needs to be appraised in terms of logic and order.

Writing of logs can be a very valuable experience for pupils. The log entries represent a purpose in writing and that being to summarize diary entries. Writing of logs challenges learners to write broad ideas which are supported by more specific content. It also provides practice for learners to review that which has been studied previously. A variety of reasons or purposes must be emphasized by the social studies teacher in having pupils write in the curriculum.

Writing and Keeping Journals

Journal writing has become popular in the social studies, Here each day, learners are given time to write what has been learned on an individual basis. What is written down represents the thinking and feelings of the involved pupil. Perhaps, five to ten minutes per day for writing journal items provide a learner with an additional worthwhile reason for relating content acquired with abstract symbols, such as written content. The teacher may or may not read the journal writing. In personal writing, the pupil might wish to share content written with others in a committee or with another learner. The choice should be up

to the pupil. If the teacher believes that a pupil is wasting time rather than writing, he/she may desire to read the journal items. Best it is if the learner takes the initiative in wanting to share written ideas and impressions. I have the following suggestions to give to teachers of pupils in journal writing:

1. time on task in creative writing is salient.
2. pupils need to be motivated to share what has been written, not forcing learners to do so.
3. a log developed for writing on the pupil's part is important.
4. creativity and critical thinking skills need to be fostered within the learner.
5. problem solving endeavors are always necessary in writing.

Journal writing is stressed as a rather recent development in the social studies. The pupil here tends to own the curriculum in this case, since he/she is in control of what is written. I recommend much flexibility and openness in journal writing emphasis in the social studies.

Writing a Formal Dramatization

Pupils tend to like and role play in life. From basal textbooks or library books, the teacher may guide pupils to choose a selection on which to write play parts. The social studies has much printed content which lends itself well to the writing of a formal dramatization. The selection chosen should have clearly expressed ideas which pupils can comprehend. Cooperatively, a committee may volunteer to write each part. Later on, others may write parts for a play in the social studies.

Learners need to work together in writing the play. Respect for the thinking of each committee member in writing the play is a must. Learning to work harmoniously within a committee is a very valuable skill to achieve. The thinking of each member in the committee is salient. The following are offered as suggestions to assist pupils with teacher leadership in writing a formal dramatization:

1. ideas for the writing of the diverse play parts should come freely

from each learner. Brainstorming can be a good procedure to secure these ideas.

2. each pupil needs to understand well what has been read from the textbook or other reference source in the social studies so that a related play can be written effectively.

3. appropriate attitudes toward reading and writing as well as listening/ speaking need to be in evidence when the play parts are written.

4. working harmoniously with each other is a must.

5. sharing, not ridiculing ideas, needs to be fostered.

The written play in its final form may and should be presented to peers in the classroom. How much of props and background scenery will be developed depends on goal attainment. Are these item salient to presenting the play? Do these items and their making have worthwhile educational values? These kinds of questions must be answered by the teacher. There is much that pupils need to learn in the school curriculum. A careful consideration on what has the most value for pupils in the social studies needs to be addressed and appraised (See Ediger, 1998, Chapter Five).

Creative Writing in the Social Studies

Goals stressing creativity on the part of pupils need adequate emphasis in the social studies. Why? Life in school and in society demand that individuals be able to solve their own problems in a creative manner. Generally what has worked for others does not work for the self in a unique problem solving situation. Then too, improvements in inventions and technology by creative individuals have made life more enjoyable and fulfilling for most in society. Creativity is necessary for individuals to appreciate experiences and activities in the world of reality. Individuals and groups possessing creativity have brought to us the good, the beautiful, and the true, in many cases and situations. Creativity has also brought on devastating situations such as more

capable instruments of war.

Writing of creative verse in the social studies has much to emphasize in ongoing lessons and units of study. First, pupils should have ample opportunities to write poetry. Writing poems can truly stress that which is creative and novel for the involved learner. Rhymed verse is fascinating to many pupils. Thus on the appropriate developmental level, pupils may write couplets in which ending words rhyme. The following was written by a pupil in a unit taught on the Middles East:

The Dome of the Rock
sits on a mountain top.

A triplet contains three lines with all ending words rhyming, such as in the following:

The Western Wall
is very old and tall
was used for a worship call.

A quatrain has four lines and all ending words may rhyme or lines one and two as well as lines three and four may rhyme. The following is an example:

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher
is important to the worshiper
to which many come with awe
having feelings of sincerity in the raw.

In the above quatrain lines one and two rhyme as well as lines three and four have rhyme. Pupils tend to enjoy writing limericks when ready. A limerick is a combination of a couplet and a triplet. Thus lines one, two, and five rhyme. Also lines three and four rhyme. Limericks usually start with the words-- "There once was____ ." However, there

can be inventive forms of verse written which have new standards as to what is inherent. A completely openended kind of verse to write is free verse. In free verse, there is no required rhyme nor number of syllables per line. The length of a free verse is also openended.

Poems may have a certain number of syllables per line such as haiku. Haiku has a five- seven- five number of syllables for each of three lines as is shown in the following written by a sixth grade pupil:

Eight gates in the wall
to enter the old city
of Jerusalem.

There are additional kinds of verse to write which have a certain number of syllables per line such as the tanka having a five- seven- five- seven- seven progression for each of five lines of verse. Actually, two more lines could be added to the haiku to make a tanka.

Metaphors, similes, alliteration, and onomatopoeia may be added as ingredients to any written poem.

Writing Folklore

Social studies content lends itself well to writing diverse forms of folklore. The writing of legends, for example, may be stressed within any unit of study. Most have heard of Davy Crockett and his skills. There even was a very popular song which made it to the top, a few years ago, in popular music pertaining to Davy Crockett, a frontier scout in American History. In legends, Davy Crockett is portrayed as an excellent marksman who at age three could shoot a fly off the nose of a person. Legends stress real flesh and blood individual, past or present, who can do supernatural things. There are no limits to the imagination as to what a person can do in a legend.

In a unit on the Middle East, for example, a pupil could write a legend on one or more of the following:

1. Benjamin Netanyahu, Yitzhak Rabin, and Ehud Barak of Israel.

2. Yassir Arafat, president of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

3. the late King Hussein and his son King Abdullah of Jordan; Hafez Assad, president of Syria; and Gamel Abdul Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarek, presidents in sequence of Egypt.

Pupils need to secure adequate background information on a person prior to writing a legend. He/she then needs to think of interesting supernatural events that relate to this legendary person chosen. Sequence of content written is important for characterization, setting, plot, and theme. Teachers need to guide pupils to read salient legends as well as discuss the ingredients that make for legends. Models of quality legends must be in the repertoire of the pupil. Here, the teacher could read entire or selections of a relevant legend to learners in the classroom setting. Additional kinds of folklore need to be understood prior to their actual writing. These should include myths, tall tales, fairy tales, and fables. Ediger (1995) wrote:

Use of the imagination is important for the ... pupil. Why? Creative behavior is necessary in school and in society. It is needed to identify and solve problems. New solutions are necessary. The tried and true may not work in a changing world. Thus, learners must develop unique, novel, and original means of human behavior. Writing tall tales can be one learning opportunity that encourages creative thought...

Pupils were generally eager to share their tall tales with others. If a pupil did not want to share, this was the pupil's prerogative. since enthusiasm is contagious, all ultimately shared..

Using the Word Processor

New personal computers tend to be user friendly. Key board skills basically are quite similar as compared to the outdated typewriter. Each pupil must become computer literate. Computer literacy is sequential and should emphasize continuous progress. With the use of the word processor, a pupil becomes an owner of the curriculum. He/she does not react only to the contents on the monitor, but also decides what commands will be given to the computer. In the writing activities

discussed previously, the pupil is the decision maker when content is placed into the computer. It is the learner who decides titles, subject matter, order of the subject matter, style of writing, as well as other literary elements. The computer then serves the pupil, not the other way around. Thus in writing a legend, the pupil is the decision maker. The pupil then decides what shall go into the legend. The teacher is a guide, a helper, and a motivator, but not a teller or explainer of what is to be done. Corrections in writing can be quickly made and does not destroy interest in writing. With cut and paste, the pupil can rearrange the order of content rather quickly. Careful proofing by the learner of the written product is as important as ever. Spell check in the computer does not catch errors in homonyms, nor other errors with correctly spelled words that are incorrectly used in writing. With errors in punctuation, the pupil will need to catch and correct each mistake as a result of proofing.

The following advantages of using computers in writing need to be emphasized:

1. spell check will catch all spelling errors and provide alternative words to the learner as to what is needed for each word in order that corrections may be made. The changes in most cases can be made in a matter of seconds.

2. all corrections made show on the monitor before the final document is printed. Thus a truly quality document may be printed even though initially, prior to proofing, the typing needed many corrections.

3. quantity and quality of typed content can certainly be increased with the use of a word processor.

4. enjoyment in writing is furthered with personal computers being highly user friendly.

5. the pupil may focus more and more on ideas written rather than the mechanics of writing, especially correct spelling of words, with the use of the word processor (See Schuncke,1992).

In Summary

Pupils need to experience variety in terms of the kinds of writing

experience engaged in. Writing in the social studies should stress the concept of writing across the curriculum. Writing should stress positive altitudes and feelings of the involved learner. Subject matter should come from the pupil who has experienced a rich learning environment. Diverse learning opportunities assists the pupil to acquire relevant facts, concepts, generalizations, and main ideas so necessary in writing. Challenge for writing and encouragement form the teacher should guide the pupil to make continuous progress on an individual and group basis in writing.

Woolfolk (1990) quoted Lee Schulman's research on what expert teachers know:

1. they know the subjects they teach.
2. the general teaching principles that apply across subjects like the principles of classroom management, effective teaching, and evaluation...
3. the curriculum materials and programs appropriate for their subject and grade level.
4. subject specific knowledge for teaching --those special ways of teaching that apply to certain students and particular concepts, such as the best ways to explain proportion and ratio problems to an accelerated algebra class.
5. learners and their characteristics.
6. the settings in which students learn--- small groups, classes, schools, and the community.
7. the goals and purposes of education.

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